



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **CAPSTONE PROJECT**

**SPECIAL OPERATIONS LIAISON OFFICER:  
LOOKING BACK TO SEE THE FUTURE**

by

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June 2014

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2014		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Capstone Project
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE SPECIAL OPERATIONS LIAISON OFFICER: LOOKING BACK TO SEE THE FUTURE			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) John Leitner, Cory Bieganeck, Phillip Madsen				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)  United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) describes its vision for the global SOF network (GSN) as a globally networked force of special operations forces (SOF), interagency partners, and allies able to respond rapidly and persistently to regional contingencies and threats to stability. USSOCOM's goals for the GSN are supported by three unique elements: capacity building, low-level presence, and the sum total of access agreements and posturing in the form of responsiveness. The command's Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO) program embodies these three elements. In a time of shrinking budgets and personnel drawdowns, USSOCOM and supported special operations component commands are faced with critical decisions about shaping their respective forces for the future. This capstone focuses on the United States Army Special Forces (SF) officers' role in the SOLO program by utilizing a multimethod approach to address concerns presented by SOLO program managers. To this end, we have presented three viable courses of action (COAs) for USSOCOM to pursue, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, for a renewed SOLO program. The COAs include: 1) enhancing the status quo, 2) capitalizing on historical lessons, and 3) aligning with current United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) initiatives. While current demands are significant, we can always look to our past to see our future.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Special Operations Liaison Officer, Special Operations, Liaison Officer, Global SOF Network, Foreign Area Officer, Country Team, National Security Decision Directive-38, SOF-FAO, International Engagement Program, USSOCOM J-55, SOF Career Track, Special Forces Proponency, 48-18, AR 600-3, Regional Career Track, Special Operations Command-Forward			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 85	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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LOOKING BACK TO SEE THE FUTURE**

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requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) describes its vision for the global SOF network (GSN) as a globally networked force of special operations forces (SOF), interagency partners, and allies able to respond rapidly and persistently to regional contingencies and threats to stability. USSOCOM's goals for the GSN are supported by three unique elements: capacity building, low-level presence, and the sum total of access agreements and posturing in the form of responsiveness. The command's Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO) program embodies these three elements.

In a time of shrinking budgets and personnel drawdowns, USSOCOM and supported special operations component commands are faced with critical decisions about shaping their respective forces for the future. This capstone focuses on the United States Army Special Forces (SF) officers' role in the SOLO program by utilizing a multimethod approach to address concerns presented by SOLO program managers.

To this end, we have presented three viable courses of action (COAs) for USSOCOM to pursue, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, for a renewed SOLO program. The COAs include: 1) enhancing the status quo, 2) capitalizing on historical lessons, and 3) aligning with current United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) initiatives. While current demands are significant, we can always look to our past to see our future.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	after action review
ACSI	Army Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence
AOR	area of responsibility
AR	Army Regulation
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ASCI	Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence
ASI	additional skill identifier
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BPC	building partner capacity
CA	civil affairs
CDR	Commander
COA	course of action
COL	Colonel
COM	Chief of Mission
COS	Chief of Staff
CPT	Captain
CSL	command selection list
DCSOPS	Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations
DCSPER	Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DLPT	defense language proficiency test
DOD	Department of Defense
ERD	curtailed, divorced, or returned their dependents early
FA	functional area
FAO	foreign area officer
FAOMS	Foreign Area Officer Management System
FASP	Foreign Area Specialist Program
FMD	Force Management Division
GCC	Geographical Combatant Command
GO	General Officer
GSN	global SOF network
HQ	Headquarters
HRC	Human Resources Command
HRM	human resource management

IEP	International Engagement Program
ILE	intermediate level education
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
JTD	Joint Table of Distribution
KD	key and developmental
LD	Leadership Development
MAOP	Military Advisor Officer Program
MDMP	military decision making process
MI	military intelligence
MiTT	military transition team
MOS	military occupational specialty
NC	non-commissioned officer
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
NSDD-38	National Security Decision Directive-38
ODCSOPS	Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel
ODCSPER	Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations & Plans
OEF/OIF	Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPCON	operational control
OPI	oral proficiency interview
OPMS	officer personnel management system
OUSD[P&R]	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense of Personnel and Readiness
PCS	permanent change of station
PME	Foreign Professional Military Education
PN	partner nation
PSYOP	psychological operations
RFI	request for information
RSCC	regional SOF coordination center
SF	special forces
SOF	special operations forces
SOLO	special operations liaison officer
SOST	special operations support teams



TDY	temporary duty
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
USAJFKSWCS	U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
USASFC	U.S. Army Special Forces Command
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USG	United States Government
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The research team is in the debt of a number of mentors, military leaders and faculty members of the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) who contributed directly or indirectly to the completion of this project. The academic climate within the Department of Defense Analysis and the network of experts who were enthusiastically willing to collaborate was a feature unique to NPS that the United States Army SOF authors will continually appreciate, and never forget.

First, Dr. William Fox and Dr. Nancy Roberts, who teamed as co-advisors for the first time, provided us with unprecedented and dynamic stewardship that constantly challenged us and markedly improved the quality of the written product. As the focus of the research shifted from quantitative to qualitative, they guided our steps and helped to refine our analysis. We really cannot say enough about these two quiet professionals who contributed so much of their time and diverse expertise to the development of both the researchers and this final product.

Next, yet equally significant, were the efforts of Mr. John Sanders and Ms. Irma Fink. Mr. Sanders worked tirelessly to make the rare document collections available to the research team, and Ms. Fink personally spent weeks tracking down a single academic thesis that would eventually serve as a cornerstone of our research—linking the historical parallels of today with the past. The often-cited Haggerty thesis is the result of Ms. Fink's personal effort to track down a simple citation published by a United States Army foreign area officer (FAO) in 1974. Stark parallels were illuminated as a result of her efforts between the requirements of today's Joint-SOF and the United States Army at war in Vietnam. Perhaps no single effort during the course of this study contributed more to the final course of our research

Dr. Arquilla, thank you for our collective turn of mind. The nuances of the heuristic approach, as well as your personal influence, we hope, are present and recognizable to you throughout this study. We certainly felt and appreciated your advice and perspective in the classroom, in the seminar, as well as in personal discussions. It is our privilege to present this project to the Department of Defense Analysis at the end of our 18 months under your stewardship.

Finally, without a doubt, the support of our families and the understanding of our wives who, during “family time” at NPS, put up with numerous “deployments” necessary to complete the research presented within this study.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SOLO CHALLENGE

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) describes its vision for the global SOF network (GSN) as a globally networked force of special operations forces (SOF), interagency partners, and allies able to respond rapidly to, and persistently address, regional contingencies and threats to stability.<sup>1</sup> The creation and sustainment of the GSN is intended to accomplish two critical goals. The first is to improve the strategic reach of the United States and enable SOF to respond more rapidly and effectively to emerging threats while deterring future ones. The second is to strengthen relationships and capabilities of strategic partners to create more stable and secure environments while increasing the capacity for joint-regional operations.<sup>2</sup>

USSOCOM's goals for the GSN are supported by three elements: 1) capacity building, 2) small footprints and low-level presence, and 3) the sum total of access agreements and posturing in the form of responsiveness.<sup>3</sup> Capacity building is set to draw heavily upon the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) SOF headquarters (HQ) model as USSOCOM seeks to establish its regional SOF coordination centers (RSCCs). Small footprints and low-level presence in turn consists of three additional components: liaison, small-scale building partner capacity (BPC), and shaping and surveillance.<sup>4</sup> One aspect of liaison, in context of the GSN, is the special operations liaison officer, or SOLO.

The Defense Strategic Guidance of 2012 calls for “small-footprint, low cost approaches to ensure U.S. security in a world of global, transnational threats.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William H. McRaven, *USSOCOM Special Operations Forces 2020*, May 10, 2013, 6.

<sup>2</sup> USSOCOM The GSN, March 22 2012, as cited in Thomas S. Szayna and William Welser IV, *Developing and Assessing Options for the Global SOF Network* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: DOD, January 2012).

The SOLO program, as one aspect of small footprints, is a critical component of both the GSN's and USSOCOM's answer to the most recent Defense Strategic Guidance. A renewed SOLO program is the central focus of this study.

The SOLO program dates back to 2006 when then-USSOCOM Commander, U.S. Army General Bryan D. Brown, identified the need for SOF representation in select partner nations. In 2007, the first SOLO was assigned to the United Kingdom on temporary duty status. Subsequent USSOCOM Commanders, Admiral Olsen and Admiral McRaven, continued their support for the SOLO program to its current strength of 13 officers. Admiral McRaven has approved the program to grow to 40 officers by 2019. The anticipated size of the SOLO program may be small when compared to other programs, but its size does not reflect its importance. Since the first U.S. Army officer served as a SOLO in 2007, the USSOCOM Personnel Directorate has worked “for years”<sup>6</sup> to develop the SOLO program's human resource process. Despite improvements, it is described within the USSOCOM Force Management Division (FMD) as a reactive process<sup>7</sup> with the following frictions that we identified by the close of 2013.

- No officer who had served as a SOLO had ever been promoted
- The SOLO program was having difficulty finding qualified personnel
- The SOLO program was largely unknown outside of USSOCOM
- All SOLO assignments were considered terminal
- Officers assigned as SOLOs received no interagency, language, or cultural training
- The SOLO's family was left unprepared for life away from a U.S. base in a foreign country

In May 2013, the USSOCOM International Engagement Program (IEP) provided funding to the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) for a study concerning

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<sup>6</sup> Derived from a small group discussion with USSOCOM Force Management Division at USSOCOM Headquarters, Tampa, FL, December 7, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> PowerPoint Presentation created by Robert Corl, *U.S. Special Operations Command: SOLO/SOST Programs*, J1-Leadership Development (Tampa, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters, November 2012), slide 2.

the development of a regional special operations career path for SOF officers. The USSOCOM J55, the Directorate of International Engagement, centrally manages the USSOCOM IEP. The intent of this study was to produce a formal career path for SOLOs that would eliminate most, if not all, the current frictions, without generating additional issues. The J55 envisioned a formal, regional SOF career track that would generate sufficient numbers of liaison officers to accomplish USSOCOM's second-highest priority, expand the GSN.

The SOLO is embedded in the partner nation's SOF HQ and is part of the U.S. country team. It is the SOLO's responsibility to serve as the single point of contact for all SOF entities in-country and report to both the Chief of Mission (COM) and to the respective Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC). SOF officers currently assigned as SOLOs are the main effort and center of gravity of the IEP,<sup>8</sup> yet the six previously listed frictions continue to affect the program. Thus, the J55 issued a list of the nine following questions it wanted answered in the course of this study.

- What is the level of interest of SOF operators for a regional SOF foreign area officer (FAO) career path?
- What are the benefits and hindrances of creating an alternate or secondary career path for SOF?
- At what point in a SOF career does each USSOCOM component offer this regional SOF career path as a viable option?
- Should the regional SOF career path be available to all SOF operators throughout their career or a closed community?
- Can the alternate career path be designed for senior level non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and warrant officers, as well as officers?
- Beyond the SOLO program, what other positions could a SOF international career path officer fill?
- What percentage of SOF operators is desired to create and maintain the career path?

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<sup>8</sup> Roy McClellan, Tommy Macias, and Adam Kordish, *Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLO): Strategic Liaison Within the Expanding Global Special Operations Forces Network*, Information Paper (Tampa, FL: USSOCOM Headquarters [J55], June 12, 2013), 1.

- What are the predicted promotion possibilities and opportunities for command?
- What are the ideal career fields from each service for selection to the regional SOF career field?

The purpose of the study was to explore a “regional SOF career track.” The J55’s objectives for the career track included the growth of the SOLO program to its targeted size of 40 personnel, sustainment of the program at 40 personnel, and enabling the promotion of officers assigned as SOLOs to the grade of O–6.

After our initial exploration of the topic (see details in the methodology description in Chapter II), it appeared that the research questions needed to be reframed and the scope narrowed given the time available for this study. Thus, the research was limited to U.S. Army special forces (SF) officer participation in the SOLO program. The authors reframed the question: How can we provide a regionally focused “SOF FAO” capability to USSOCOM? We widened the aperture bearing on the initial question by refocusing on the capability and narrowed the scope of the problem by focusing only U.S. Army SF officers instead of SOF officers from all branches of service. With this new approach in place, we offer this product to the sponsor in the time available. The following supporting questions helped narrow the scope to focus on Army SF officers.

- Can parallels from other programs inform a renewed regional SOF career track/program:
  - U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer Program (FAO: 1973–Present)?
  - U.S. Army Foreign Area Specialist Program (FASP: 1947–1973)?
  - U.S. Army Military Advisor Officer Program (MAOP: 1969–1973)
- Based on this review of other programs, what features could inform a renewed SOLO program?
- Based on this review of other programs, what life cycle model could inform a renewed SOLO program?



- What issues are likely to impede the implementation of a renewed SOLO program and how can SOF address them?

To address these questions, the remainder of this study is comprised of the following chapters. Chapter II presents the methodology used in collecting and analyzing data to answer the four questions that guide this study. Chapter III provides a comprehensive description of the SOLO program and life cycle. Chapter IV describes the U.S. Army's FAO, and especially its precursor programs that can inform a renewed SOLO program. Next, the parallels are illuminated in the genesis of the FAO's precursor programs that bear directly on USSOCOM's contemporary SOLO program. These precursors to FAO, the Foreign Area Specialist Program (FASP) and the Military Advisor Officer Program (MAOP), provide a historical blueprint for the J55's contemporary requirements. Chapter V gives an in-depth analysis and present courses of action (COAs) for consideration. Chapter VI concludes the study on this design challenge.

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## **II. STUDY METHODOLOGY**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This capstone project's intent is to aid in the development of the SOLO program. While acknowledging the multiservice complexities surrounding the USSOCOM SOLO program, the specific focus of this project was dedicated to Army-centric aspects. The primary reason for narrowing down research to this one DOD service was due to multiservice research complexity. It was not possible to examine all DOD services in an acceptable manner in the limited time available. Service familiarity and access also played a significant role; our research team participating in this capstone project is comprised of all Army SF officers. Although the course of this project was modified substantially as the study progressed, the purpose remained focused on illuminating potential COAs that could be used to advance the SOLO program. This chapter describes the research methods used to gather information and how the data was analyzed to inform our recommendations.

### **B. ESTABLISHING THE FOUNDATION**

We began our efforts with the USSOCOM J55 research proposal that formally requested assistance from NPS. The supporting questions, listed in Chapter I, posed by the J55 before departing NPS for USSOCOM headquarters in Tampa, Florida were reviewed. We met with the project sponsor at USSOCOM to determine if the problem statement was framed properly, and whether the forthcoming research plan matched the needs of all the stakeholders.

Initially, we met with the J55 Director, FMD Chief, Personnel Directorate (J1) representative and seven current SOLOs who had travelled to USSOCOM HQ to participate in an annual SOLO conference. Soon after the meeting began, a U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel (O-5) serving as a SOLO provided his estimate that up to 35% of USSOCOM SOLOs are "curtailed, divorced, or returned their dependents early (ERD) as a result of their SOLO assignment." The officer

supported his statement by naming the SOLOs who met one of the three criteria, and the remaining SOLOs concurred. No one present at the meeting objected to this assertion.

The approximate “1/3 assumption” became a valid and necessary planning factor for the project team. Unless data could be found to counter this assumption, no rationale or justification existed for a program with about a 1/3 chance of generating a failure for the officer’s family. Service component buy-in for a USSOCOM program with this statistical record would likely remain limited, at best.

Most importantly, the J55’s current “main effort” for accomplishing the Commander (CDR), USSOCOM’s priority #2 (expand the GSN) was directly at odds with the CDR’s priority #3 (preservation of the force and families), as well as priority #1 (win the current fight). As Admiral McRaven stated, “We cannot win the current fight without preserving the force and its families.”<sup>9</sup> At this point, it became clear that this study would require some more in-depth analysis.

## **C. MULTIMETHOD**

### **1. Archival Research**

#### **a. *Foreign Area Officer History: Looking Back to Illuminate the Future***

We pursued what the U.S. Army had done when a “SOF FAO” capability was needed in time of protracted war. In particular, we relied on then-U.S. Army MAJ Neil Haggerty’s detailed history of the U.S. Army’s FAO program. Haggerty’s academic thesis was published at the USMC Staff College in 1974 and is described in detail in Chapter IV of this study. MAJ Haggerty revealed the deliberate steps that the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army took in building and implementing the FAO program in 1973. Equally important, his work illuminates parallels with the contemporary SOLO program in describing the MAOP and the

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<sup>9</sup> ADM McRaven, “Interview,” *Special Warfare Magazine* 25, no. 2 (April–June 2012): 10.

FASP that were merged into the FAO program, a possible endgame for the current SOLO program.

***b. Contemporary Program Research***

We conducted archival research on the following programs: the USSOCOM SOLO program, the current U.S. Army FAO program, and the USSOCOM special operations support teams (SOST) program. Exploration of the life cycle model of the three programs enabled us to gain an understanding of how these programs functioned. The human resource life cycle describes the structure, assessment/selection, skill development/training, assignment processes, professional development, and promotion of the human resources. These aspects are predominately based on human resource management (HRM) and not the operational function of the programs. Our archival data relied heavily upon both DOD officially published documents and unofficial PowerPoint presentations produced by the various stakeholders. Due to the constantly changing environment, these PowerPoint presentations provided the most accurate, although unofficially published, data.

(1) Army Foreign Area Officer Program. Although the Army FAO program is not inherently special operations focused, it has many duty description and environmental similarities with the SOLO program. The *Army* FAO program was specifically selected because it is the largest FAO program in the DOD and it dedicates more time and training resources per FAO compared to the other services. The early accessions and single career track of an Army FAO allow the longest length of time to learn and implement the profession. While all the services' programs have their strengths, the Army FAO training program has been unofficially described as the "gold standard" of joint FAO programs.<sup>10</sup> Last, the majority of the personnel who will be performing SOLO duties will come from the Army. As of March 2014, the J55 has allocated 26 of 40 projected SOLO

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<sup>10</sup> Amy A. Alrich, Joseph Adams, and Claudio C. Biltoc, *The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis, August 2013), 47.

billets to the Army. This reason alone legitimizes this capstone project's focus on Army centric systems.

Each department within the DOD operates differently and has a unique culture, which should factor into the implementation of a new program. The description and analysis of the Army FAO program may or may not benefit the Air Force, Marine, and Navy portion of the SOLO program. However, the submit that capitalizing on Army FAO lessons learned could prevent wasted time and resources especially when developing the Army centric aspects of the SOLO program.

(2) Special Operations Support Team. Archival data were collected and analyzed on the USSOCOM SOST program because of similar roles the SOST and SOLO programs perform in the GSN. With similar billet numbers, approximately 40, the programs' size match up. USSOCOM also centrally manages both programs with the personnel support of their parent services.

## **2. Stakeholder Working Groups**

As the archival data accumulated, we began incorporating field information from SOLO program stakeholder working groups. Over the course of this study, we worked with 35 individuals representing 14 SOLO stakeholder organizations listed in Table 1. Dialog with stakeholders was critical to understanding the unique aspects of each SOLO assignment. We identified SOLO program stakeholders as those with the formal power to make a decision affecting the SOLO program, those with the power to block a decision, those affected by a decision, and those with relevant information or expertise.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> David A. Straus, *How to Make Collaboration Work: Powerful Ways to Build Consensus, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002), 40, Kindle Edition.

Table 1. SOLO Program Stakeholders

STAKEHOLDERS	Management Function	User	Provider	Subject-Matter Expert
Input From	<p>USSOCOM J55 International Engagement Division</p> <p>USSOCOM J1/5/7 Force Management Division</p> <p>Army Human Resources Command</p>	<p>SOCEUR</p> <p>SOCAC</p> <p>SOCENT</p> <p>SOC SOUTH</p> <p>SOC NORTH</p>	<p>10th Special Forces Group</p> <p>U.S. Army Special Forces Proponency</p> <p>U.S. Army Office of Special Warfare</p>	<p>Army Foreign Area Officer Proponency</p> <p>USSOCOM Special Operations Support Team</p> <p>Current Special Operations Liaison Officers</p>
Not Included	<p>U.S. Navy Personnel Command</p> <p>U.S. Air Force Personnel Center</p> <p>U.S. Marine Corps Personnel Management Support Branch</p>	<p>U.S. Department of State Policy</p> <p>U.S. Country Teams</p> <p>Host Nation Policy</p> <p>Host Nation Military</p>	<p>U.S. Navy</p> <p>U.S. Air Force</p> <p>U.S. Marines</p>	

Stakeholders were categorized into those who perform management functions in the SOLO program, end users of the program, force providers to the program, and subject matter experts. Means of communication with the stakeholders varied to include face-to-face working groups, video and telephonic communication, and electronic mail. Stakeholders not directly connected to the SOLO program provided input on their respective programs (FAO and SOST), as well as their input on the SOLO program. Table 1 also identifies stakeholders not

involved due to time and resource limitations. Due to the critical role they have with the SOLO program, the research team recommends that they be included in future research. They submit that this stakeholder table does not necessarily capture all pertinent stakeholders.

### **3. Comparative Case Studies**

Comparative analysis of the SOLO, SOST, and Army FAO programs identified their positive and negative factors. Organizational design case studies were standardized along human resource life cycle functions. These life cycle functions consisted of structure, assessment/selection, skill development/training, assignment processes, professional development, and promotion. We created a spreadsheet capturing the three programs' life cycle positive and negative factors highlighted during archival research. Stakeholder feedback helped verify the validity of our factor assessment, as well as contributing their own assessment. Comparing case studies identified positive trends to be adopted, negative trends to mitigate, and current SOLO factors that should be maintained in our COAs. Spreadsheet analysis helped illuminate potential SOLO HRM and structural changes that could reduce the frictions inherent in the current SOLO program.

### **D. COURSES OF ACTION**

COAs evolved from archival data, data from stakeholder working groups, and the comparative case studies. To create the COAs, we utilized the standard military decision making process (MDMP) COA criteria of: suitability, feasibility, acceptability, distinguishability, and completeness. FM 101-5 defines COA suitability as accomplishing the mission and complying with the commander's guidance; feasibility as the capability to accomplish the mission in terms of available time, space, and resources; acceptability as the advantage gained by executing the COA must justify the cost in resources; distinguishability as each COA must differ significantly from any others regarding task organization and



scheme of maneuver; and completeness as the COA must complete the mission statement.<sup>12</sup>

For this project, we believe the criteria of suitability, feasibility and acceptability, are vital. Figure 1 illustrates how the methods directly relate to COA development. End results of this project are three potential COAs and several recommendations to help USSOCOM achieve the operational intent of the SOLO program.

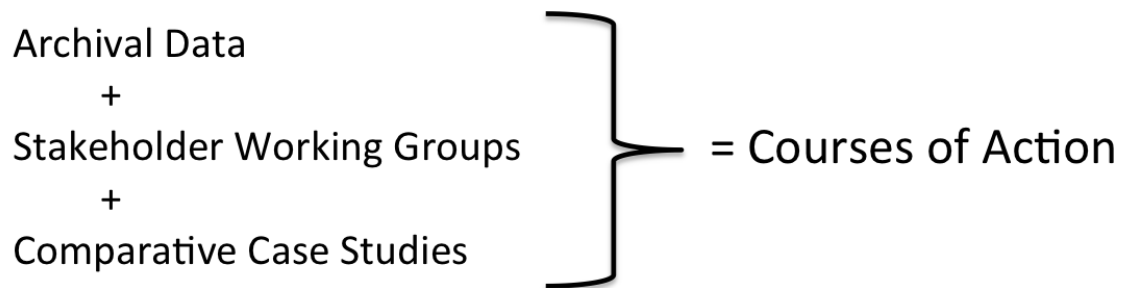


Figure 1. Course of Action Development

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<sup>12</sup> FM 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, May 1997, 5-11.

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### **III. DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLO PROGRAM'S LIFE-CYCLE**

#### **A. PURPOSE**

This chapter provides a description and general overview of the genesis, current state of affairs, and proposed future, of the SOLO program. This description provides a solid base to compare and contrast with other case studies to draw parallels and identify positive and negative aspects that inform recommendations to improve the SOLO program. Specifically, the description is focused on the current HRM processes of the SOLO program associated with the development of a life-cycle model.

##### **1. The Genesis of the SOLO Program**

###### ***a. Background***

In 2006, then-USSOCOM Commander, General Bryan D. Brown, identified the need for SOF representation in select partner nations (PNs) to fulfill the following duties and responsibilities.

A SOLO's primary function is to coordinate United States SOF (USSOF) development efforts at foreign national level SOF command headquarters (HQ) and to facilitate establishment and nurturing of institutional relationships to the partner nation's (PN) Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Interior, and civilian leadership. Additionally, the SOLO acts as the SOF advisor to the U.S. Chief of Mission, the country team, and the PN SOF commander. SOLOs are responsible for maintaining visibility over all U.S. SOF activities within the PN and to coordinate SOF activities in support of the Mission Strategic Resourcing Plan in coordination with the Senior Defense Official while also assisting the TSOC in the development of PN special operations capabilities and capacities from the strategic through the tactical level.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> David Bills, *J55*, White Paper (Tampa, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters, August 2012), 1.

General Brown began taking steps to fulfill this need by emplacing a SOLO in the United Kingdom as the initial “test-bed” for this concept. In January 2007, the first SOLO was assigned on temporary duty (TDY) status to the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> Following General Brown’s tenure as the Commander of USSOCOM, Admiral Olsen (Commander USSOCOM from July 2007 to August 2011), and the current Commander, Admiral McRaven, have supported the program and have grown it to its current state. Presently, SOLOs are supporting 13 countries (Figure 2) in every Geographical Combatant Command (GCC). Of these current 13 active SOLO assignments, U.S. Army officers between the ranks of Major and Colonel fill 10 of them. Of these 10, nine are U.S. Army SF officers and one is a U.S. Army FAO (who was previously a U.S. Army SF officer). Additionally, approved plans call for 27 more countries to receive SOLO billets by 2019. All 13 of the currently assigned officers serving in the SOLO program are in a permanent change of station (PCS) status. PCS status supports a more persistent presence in the supported PN and affords the assigned officers the opportunity to be accompanied by their families, if applicable.

Placing senior SOF officers in SOLO billets, serving an average of three years in length, helps signify the importance of the relationship between the two countries, as well as aiding in relationship and trust building.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Derived from archival data maintained at the USSOCOM J55, March 2014.

<sup>15</sup> A common theme derived from the officers assigned to the SOLO program and the SOLO program managers who participated in the SOLO week at USSOCOM HQ in December 2013.

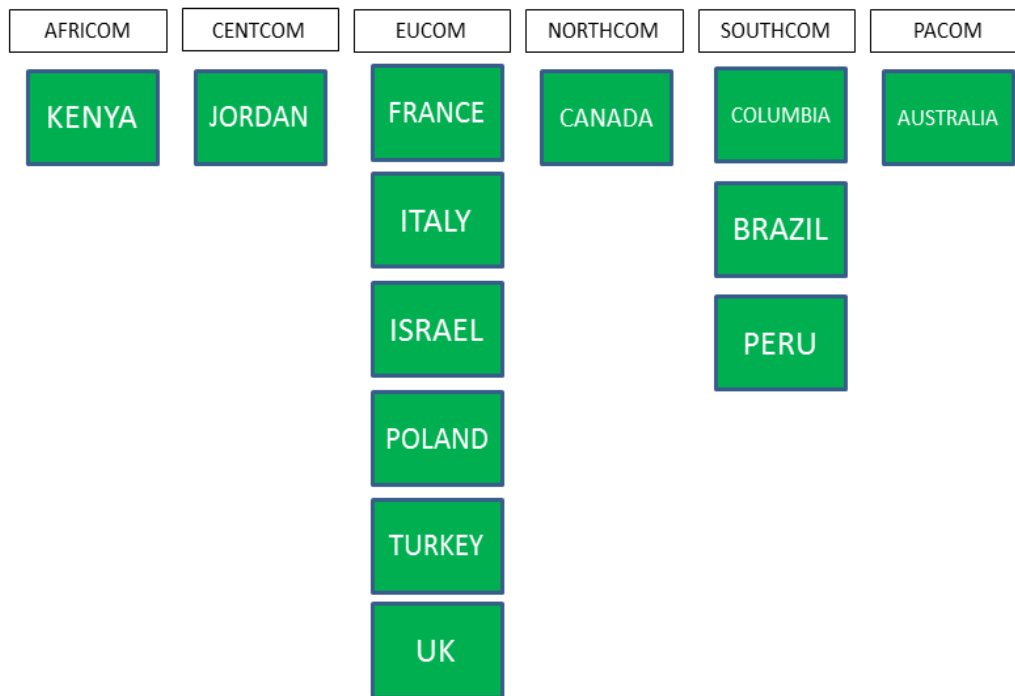


Figure 2. Countries Currently Being Supported by SOLOs (as of May 15, 2014)

**b. Structure**

The SOLO program is currently managed in the USSOCOM J5 (Directorate of Strategy, Plans, and Policy) by the J55 (International Engagement Division). This program is the “[M]ain [E]ffort and [C]enter of [G]ravity of the International Engagement Program (IEP),”<sup>16</sup> and as such, the J55 allocates considerable resources in the management of this initiative (i.e., time, manpower, funding). The J55 manages the recruitment, training, and emplacing of U.S. Army SF) officers selected to serve in the SOLO program. Once employed, the officers serve under the operational control (OPCON) of the TSOC CDR in the respective TSOC area of responsibility (AOR). The officer assigned to the SOLO program is employed under National Security Decision Directive-38 (See Figure 3), vice Title-10 (like the majority of U.S. military forces employed throughout the world).

<sup>16</sup> McClellan, Macias, and Kordish, *Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLO): Strategic Liaison Within the Expanding Global Special Operations Forces Network*, 1.

## National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 38

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- The **National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 38** dated June 2, 1982, gives the Chief of Mission (COM) control of the size, composition, and mandate of overseas full-time mission staffing for all U.S. Government agencies.
- The Under Secretary for Management's Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation (M/PRI) has the lead in managing requests by U.S. Government agencies for additions, deletions, and changes to their staffing overseas.
- M/PRI coordinates with agencies and Department of State Bureaus and Missions to assess the resource, security, and strategic goals in placing U.S. Government personnel abroad.

Figure 3. NSDD-38<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the officer is part of the U.S. country team to guarantee the officer space in the embassy and a position that affords the latitude to work both in the embassy and PN HQ based on operational needs.

Operationally, officers assigned to the SOLO program work directly for the TSOC CDR (depicted by the solid line in Figure 4), subject to the COM's authority. Administratively, this officer receives support from USSOCOM through the J55, in cooperation with the USSOCOM FMD (delineated by the dashed lines in Figure 4).

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of State, "National Security Decision Directive (NSSD) 38," accessed April 30, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/m/pri/nsdd/>.

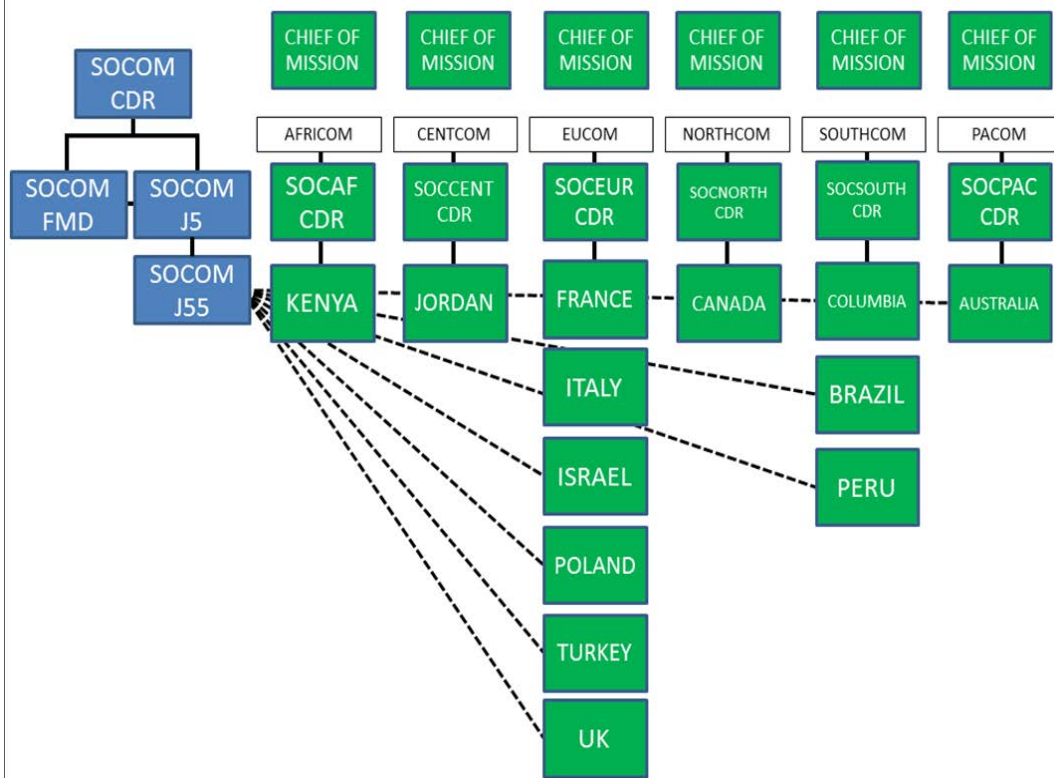


Figure 4. SOLO Operational and Administrative Relationships

During Admiral McRaven's tenure as CDR, USSOCOM established the FMD to manage all USSOCOM personnel-related functions.<sup>18</sup> The FMD is comprised of the J1 (Directorate of Personnel), J7/J9 (Directorate of Training, Doctrine, and Capability Development), Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), and Preservation of the Force and Families.<sup>19</sup> As such, the FMD has been assigned personnel management duties for Army SF officers assigned to the SOLO program. The relationship between the officer assigned to the SOLO program, the FMD, and the J55 is currently influx. The J55 and the FMD are

<sup>18</sup> Ascertained from collaborative working group meetings held at USSOCOM HQ, Tampa, FL during the SOLO week in December 2013.

<sup>19</sup> United States Special Operations Command, *U.S. Special Operations Command: Fact Book 2013* (Tampa, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters, 2013), 10.

currently collaborating to work through all the various dynamics of adding another layer of bureaucracy to the HRM system.

This HRM system is further complicated by the fact that the SOLO program is comprised of officers who belong to a separate service, not USSOCOM (in this study's case, the Army). The SF Branch at HRC Headquarters in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and the SF Regimental Proponency at Fort Bragg, NC manage the career of an Army SF officer. USSOCOM does not manage the career progression of a U.S. Army SF officer assigned as a SOLO. The U.S. Army and Special Forces Branch manage the careers of all U.S. Army SF officers. While U.S. Army officers assigned as SOLOs will fall under USSOCOM or a TSOC for the time that they are assigned to a position under such commands, they will only do so for the period of their assignment. This importance is illuminated in subsequent chapters.

### ***c. Life-Cycle Model***

The current SOLO program does not have a life-cycle model, whose development is, in part, one of the purposes of this study.

(1) Accessions Process. The accessions process is an ongoing cycle as the SOLO program and the list of PNs it is supporting grows. USSOCOM has provided the ideal accessions process shown in Figure 5. The current accessions process, consisting of recruitment, or nomination, and selection, is an 18–24 month process. Accessions is initiated when the demand signal is identified by the J55 SOLO program managers.<sup>20</sup> The J1-Leadership Development (LD) will then conduct an after action review (AAR), in which the focus is on identifying the desired competencies and requirements for the respective SOLO position. Then, on a bi-annual basis, the J1-LD will produce a “call for nominations” announcement that will be disseminated throughout the service SOF component commands (e.g., United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC)

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<sup>20</sup> A plan is in place to expand the SOLO program through 2019. Most billets have been identified and coded for officers representing a service component SOF command (i.e., coded for an O-4, U.S. Army 18A SFO).



will distribute to the U.S. Army SF population). The candidates will then be considered for service in the SOLO program by a board consisting of the J1-LD, J55, TSOC CDR, and USSOCOM Chief of Staff (COS).<sup>21</sup> Once an SF officer is selected, that individual is notified through the SF branch at Human Resources Command (HRC).

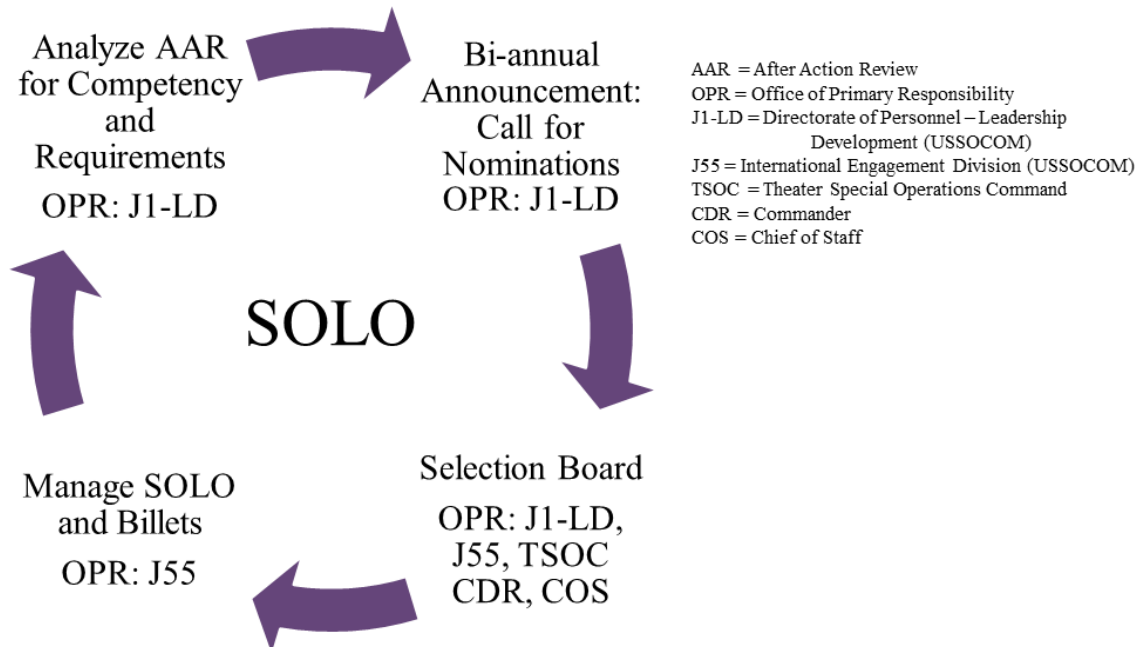


Figure 5. SOLO Accessions Cycle<sup>22</sup>

In March 2014, the FMD developed a plan to implement its recruitment plan through the use of four different avenues: 1) a strategic communications plan, 2) relying on individual SF officers to self-nominate for the positions, 3) reaching out to intermediate level education institutions for potential nominees, and 4) working with TSOCs to identify potential candidates who have already

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that the TSOC CDR retains the right to deny any candidate who is recommended to serve as a SOLO within their AOR. The ability to stop SF officers from serving as a SOLO is also retained by the USASOC CDR.

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from PowerPoint Presentation created by Robert Corl, *U.S. Special Operations Command: SOLO/SOST Programs*, J1-Leadership Development (Tampa, FL: U.S. Special Operations Command Headquarters, November 2012), slide 3.

garnered some of the valuable TSOC experience already identified as a key qualification.<sup>23</sup> As of May 2014, this plan has not been initiated.

(2) Skill Acquisition Cycle. Due to the current ad-hoc and reactive nature of the assignments in SOLO program, SF officers have been selected and employed without receiving opportunities to acquire the requisite skills. Additionally, it applies to the maintenance/enhancement of previously trained skills, such as language. This is not to imply that the SOLO program is not receiving “trained” or ‘qualified” officers to serve in the program. Many of the Army SF officers selected to serve as SOLOs have entered the program with similar attributes that USSOCOM and program stakeholders have identified. While some desired skills come with the officer to the assignment, USSOCOM and other stakeholders have recommended the development of a formal skill acquisition cycle.<sup>24</sup>

According to USSOCOM SOLO program managers in the J55, the selected U.S. Army SF officers have all been between the rank of Major (O–4) and Colonel (O–6), have experience working at USSOCOM or TSOCs, and have been determined to be language competent “enough” to serve as a SOLO.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the course of a SF officer’s career, that officer will be assigned to an operational group that will likely serve in a TSOC AOR, or be assigned to a TSOC, and will obtain the experience desired. If the selected officers do not have either of these experiences, USSOCOM intends to work with service assignment officers to provide an equivalent opportunity prior to their employment as a SOLO (Figure 5).

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<sup>23</sup> Force Management Division, *U.S. Special Operations Command Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO) and Special Operations Support Team (SOST) Overt Road Map Concept* (Tampa, FL: United States Special Operations Command Headquarters). Adapted from the PowerPoint Presentation, March 4, 2014, Slide 16.

<sup>24</sup> Ascertained from collaborative design working group meetings held during SOLO Week at USSOCOM HQ, December 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Information gleaned over the course of Collaborative Design Working Groups held at USSOCOM HQ December 6, 2013. It should be noted that the term “enough” is used to identify that the decision was made based on language requirements to facilitate the SOLO functions in a PN. For example, the SOLO in Canada can get by with English while this may not be the case in all other PNs.

All Army SF officers are trained in at least one language that corresponds with their assigned operational group AOR (i.e., an officer assigned to 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) will be trained in German, French, or Russian). According to Army Regulation (AR) 600–3, all SF officers are required to maintain proficiency in their target language by testing annually in either of the two approved testing mediums, the defense language proficiency test (DLPT) or the oral proficiency interview (OPI).<sup>26</sup> The ideal SF officer in the SOLO program would have a 3/3 rating in the target language, but the current minimum accepted by USSOCOM is listed as a 2/2.<sup>27</sup> Although, not all officers currently serving as SOLOs are a 2/2, or even a 1/1, in their target language, the program continues to move forward.

An example of the USSOCOM desired timeline for the skill acquisition cycle is depicted in Figure 6. The proposed example timeline includes one year of Foreign Professional Military Education (PME), or U.S. PME equivalents, and two years of TSOC/regional experience to be followed by a 3-year tour of duty as a SOLO in an assigned country. In total, this proposed skill acquisition timeline would take three years, vice the one to 1.5 year PME timeline for traditional PME completion required by U.S. Army and Service component regulations.<sup>28</sup> This extended timeline is due to USSOCOM's desire to employ a SF officer at a TSOC to garner experience in a future assigned AOR.

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<sup>26</sup> AR 600–3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, Headquarters (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, February 1, 2010), 169.

<sup>27</sup> Force Management Division, *U.S. Special Operations Command Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO) and Special Operations Support Team (SOST) Overt Road Map Concept* (Tampa, FL: United States Special Operations Command Headquarters). PowerPoint Presentation, March 4, 2014, slide 3.

<sup>28</sup> This point is made to merely highlight the amount of time and give context to the additional time that would be required for a formal career track, which includes this skill acquisition cycle.

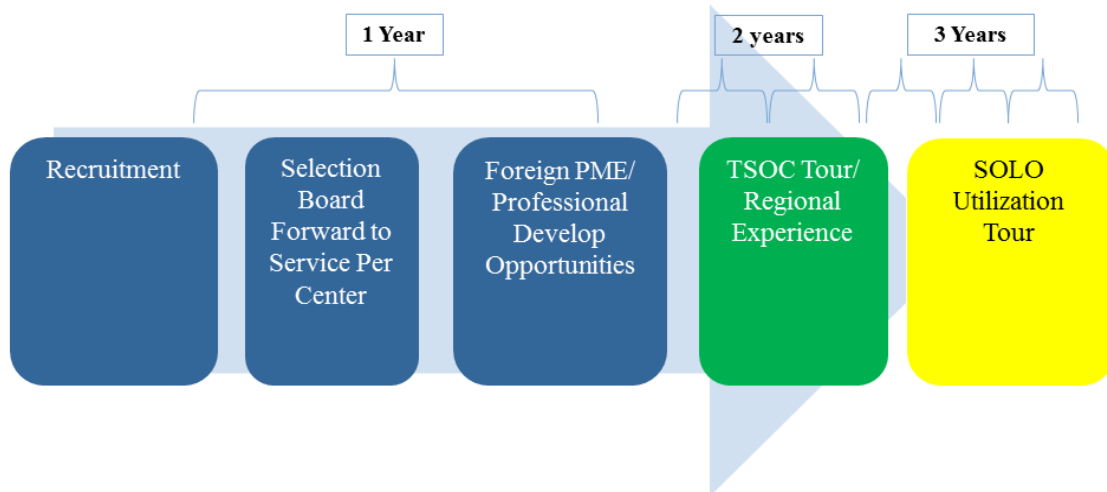


Figure 6. SOLO Skill Acquisition Cycle<sup>29</sup>

(3) Assignment Cycle. As of March 2014, all Army SF officers assigned to the SOLO program have served only one assignment as a SOLO before retiring or moving to their next assignment. Therefore, the lack of repeat assignments makes it impossible to indicate whether this cycle could, or would, include multiple utilization tours as a SOLO for an SF officer. Before the SF officer is assigned as a SOLO, USSOCOM FMD personnel must process a request for an officer that fits their desires for the position (i.e., a SF Lieutenant Colonel who is a 3/3 in Arabic and has experience in the SOCCENT AOR and/or at the TSOC level). Notably, the TSOC Commander retains the right to veto any nominated officer to a SOLO billet in their AOR. The assignment of the approved officer to the SOLO program is then staffed at HRC through the SF branch personnel and approved through an annual manning conference.

USSOCOM is currently filling the SOLO billets with officers placed in already codified USSOCOM and TSOC billets. Currently, 14 USSOCOM billets are codified in the Joint Table of Distribution (JTD) for SOLOs. Of the 13 currently serving SOLOs, 11 are in USSOCOM billets and two are in TSOC billets. The current assignment cycle is conducted in this manner (ad-hoc, create

<sup>29</sup> Force Management Division, U.S. Special Operations Command Special Operations Liaison Officer, adapted from Slide 5.

ways to fill positions) to facilitate the continual flow of SOLOs to valued PNs, which is done within the confines of a downsizing military, shrinking budgets, and the build-out of the TSOCs from USSOCOM billets. This build-out of TSOCs is part of Admiral McRaven's plan, and responsibility,<sup>30</sup> to organize all SOF in a manner that "supports the goals and objectives of the Defense Strategic Guidance; and to provide combat ready forces to the President and the Secretary of Defense to meet the challenges of today's security environment."<sup>31</sup>

Once assigned to the SOLO billet, the SF officer will receive PCS orders for one to three years (depending on place of assignment; most assignments are three years minimum). If a multiyear assignment, an officer serving in the SOLO program may be able to travel accompanied by family. The investment of a U.S. service member and family indicates the level of commitment of the United States Government (USG) to PNs, as well as to facilitate the building of relationships and trust. USSOCOM is currently working to establish a more conducive assignment cycle to the enhancement of an officer's career following an assignment as a SOLO.<sup>32</sup>

(4) Professional Development Cycle. No, formalized professional development cycle has been established at this time. The J55 is working collectively with the FMD to create a program of record establishing the bureaucratic mechanisms that will support professional development.

It is important to understand that USSOCOM does not control the career progression timelines of U.S. Army SF officers. The SF Regimental Proponency and the Department of the Army Human Resources Command control the career progression of U.S. Army SF officers' doctrine and codified processes outlined in

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<sup>30</sup> Title 10 U.S. Code Sections 164 and 167.

<sup>31</sup> William McRaven, "Posture Statement Before the 113th Congress House Armed Services Committee," March 6, 2013, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20130306/100394/HHRG-113-AS00-Wstate-McRavenUSNA-20130306.pdf>, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Gleaned from Collaborative Design Working Groups held at USSOCOM Headquarters, Tampa, FL, December 6, 2013.

documents, such as AR 600–3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*.

The J55 has developed an “ideal” professional development cycle similar to what the U.S. Army FAO program utilizes. Figure 7 is an example of what USSOCOM is proposing as an alternate professional development cycle for SF officers. On the left, is the “ideal” SF officer’s progression along what is referred to as the “operational or command track.” On the right is the proposed SOLO progression model. This proposed career progression and professional development cycle has not been approved or implemented by either concerned party (USSOCOM or SF Regimental Proponency) at this time.

Year	Career Track for SF Officer	Boards	SOLO
0	OBC		Same
1	LT Time	1.5 - Pin 1LT	
2		2.5 - ARSOF Board	
3		3-4 - Pin CPT/SFAS	
4	Career Level School		
5	Special Forces Qual. Course		Special Forces Qual. Course
6	Special Forces Group CPT Time		Special Forces Group CPT Time
7			
8		8.5 - PZ MAJ	
9	USASOC	9.5 - Pin MAJ	Language
10			Grad School / ILE / FPME
11	ILE		
12	Special Forces MAJ Time		Initial SOF Rep Tour / SOFLE
13			
14			
15			
16	Joint Assignment	16 - PZ LTC / 16.5 Pin LTC	TSOC/USASOC/SOCOM/RSCC
17			
18	BN Command		Intermediate Level SOF Rep / SOLO Tour / Attache
19			
20	TSOC/USASOC/HQ USSOCOM		TSOC / SOCOM / TLS
21			
22		22 - PZ COL	
23	Group Command	23 - Pin COL	Top Level SOLO Tour

Figure 7. Proposed Professional Development Cycle for U.S. Army SF Officers Who Serve as SOLOs<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Adapted from the J55 International Engagement Program, United States Special Operations Command, *The International Engagement Program: Establishing Persistent, Culturally Attuned Engagement*, PowerPoint Presentation, February 27, 2013, Slide 4.

(5) Promotion. No U.S. Army SF officer has been promoted from the rank of O-5 to O-6 following an assignment as a SOLO.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, no promotion mechanism is in place for SF officers who serve in SOLO billets since the duty of SOLO is not codified as being “key and developmental” (KD) as per Army Regulation 600-3.<sup>35</sup> In SF, and the Army Maneuver Fires and Effects division, the successful completion of KD assignments listed in Figure 8 make a Major eligible to compete for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The only KD assignment for SF officers at the rank of LTC is a Battalion Command. For an officer to be eligible for promotion to the rank of Colonel, it will be necessary to have completed a Battalion Command.



## MAJOR “KEY AND DEVELOPMENTAL”



SFG Company Cdr  
SFG Battalion S3  
SFG Battalion XO  
SF Detachment 39 Cdr  
SFG OPS Detachment Cdr  
SFG GSC Cdr  
SFG GWOT Planner  
SMU Troop Cdr  
SMU Squadron S3 / XO  
SWTG Group / Battalion S3  
SWTG Battalion XO  
SWTG Company Cdr  
SOCCENT (Ops / Plans)  
SOCEUR (Ops / Plans)  
SOCAFRICA (Ops / Plans)  
SOCPAC (Ops / Plans)  
SOCKOR (Ops / Plans)  
SOC SOUTH (Ops / Plans)  
SOCJFCOM (Ops / Plans)

USSOCOM J3 (Ops / Plans)  
SORB XO  
CAC SOF Cell  
JRTC / NTC SOF Planners

AWG Troop Cdr  
SATMO S3 / XO  
162<sup>nd</sup> INF BDE S3 / XO

\* Three MAJs per year chosen to remain for a third year to serve as the GRP S3 / OPS DET / GSC

CG USASFC(A) Approves tactical group slate and exceptions

AVG SF Officer = 27 mos KD, highest in MFE

DA PAM 600-3, Chapter 17

Figure 8. SF Major “KD” Assignments

SF officers will also need to serve in other positions prior to competing for promotion to the rank of LTC or colonel. The officers who desire to remain more

<sup>34</sup> Ascertained during collaborative working groups at USSOCOM HQ, December 4, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> AR 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, 169-171.

competitive for promotion and selection for a command assignment will seek a “broadening” assignment (refer to Figure 9 for current broadening assignments). These assignments, while not KD, will help to favorably pad an officer’s profile for promotion. As of May 2014, the SOLO assignment is not listed as one of these assignments.



## POST KD ASSIGNMENTS



### 1. Serving the Regiment:

USASOC  
USASFC  
USAJFKSWCS  
DDSO (JOINT)  
G3 SOD  
TSOCs (JOINT)  
Inter Agency (JOINT)  
SATMO  
SOCOM (JOINT)  
JRTC/NTC  
USMA  
NAG (JOINT)  
CAC  
NSHQ (JOINT)  
DTRA (JOINT)

### 2. Broadening Opportunity Programs:

- Arroyo Fellowship
- Regional Fellowship
- NDU SWC&S Campus
- White House Fellow
- SOLA (SOCOM)
- SAMS

### 3. Nominative:

- HRC
- ADC
- SGS
- MILASST

### 4. Special Management Division

### 5. ST

***Performance Matters!***



Figure 9. SF Major Post KD Assignments

While the service as a SOLO is valuable to the USSOCOM enterprise as a whole, its non-codification in U.S. Army governing documents and promotion boards leaves this portion of the SOLO life-cycle model unaddressed.

## B. SUMMARY

Understanding the basics of the HRM processes associated with the SOLO program provides program managers and stakeholders alike with the



requisite base from which to compare other programs. We next move into a comparative analysis to highlight parallels between programs that offer similar capabilities and have faced similar issues.

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## IV. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

What has been will be again,  
What has been done will be done again;  
There is nothing new under the sun.

—Ecclesiastes 1:9

Chapter IV describes how a problem set very similar to the one currently faced by the SOLO program has been encountered and addressed in the past. This historical perspective is presented in two parts. First, the Army's FAO program is described from its origin following the merger of two preceding programs. The longest running precursor to the modern U.S. Army FAO program was FASP, the U.S. Army's solution to providing foreign and regional specialists following World War II. The second precursor was the U.S. Army's MAOP, which was established to meet the Army's operations focused requirements during the Vietnam War. The MAOP/FASP/FAO relationship is shown in Figure 10.

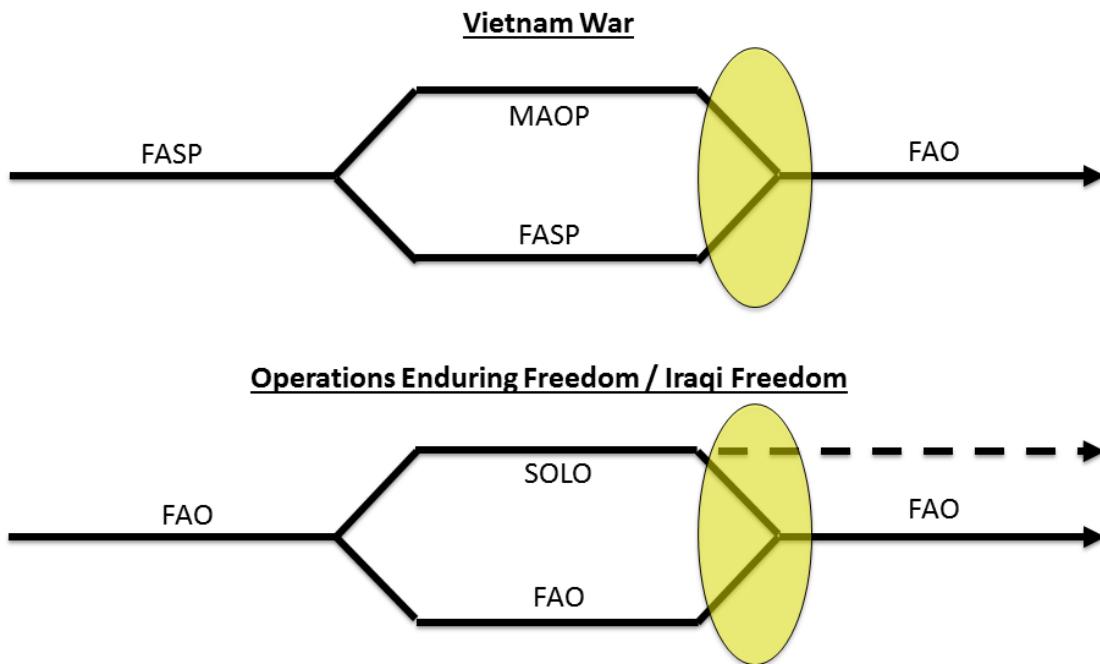


Figure 10. A Precedent from History; The Merger of Similar Programs

Frictions in the evolutionary stages of the U.S. Army FAO program are identified that indirectly or directly correlate to USSOCOM's post-9/11 solution for building a GSN, the SOLO program. Throughout this chapter, we present compelling parallels between the USSOCOM SOLO program and a similar U.S. Army program, the MAOP, which faced analogous issues over 40 years ago. Furthermore, we argue the success of the U.S. Army's FAO program is attributable to the intentional design that senior leaders took when establishing the modern program in 1973.

The U.S. Army has been pursuing methods that produce foreign area specialists since WWII. It should be expected that USSOCOM would face some similar growing pains as it attempts to establish and expand its similar SOLO program. USSOCOM stands only to benefit from additional knowledge and understanding of the U.S. Army's 67 years of successful FAO program leadership and partner nation engagement. Current FAO program managers, along with their counterparts at USSOCOM, should enjoy a level of comradeship with their predecessors as they read this chapter. Collectively, this situation has been faced before, and while separated often by decades, many of the same problems have been addressed.

#### **A. THE FOREIGN AREA SPECIALIST AND THE MILITARY ADVISOR**

During World War II, the U.S. Army's language program trained thousands of linguists and oriented them towards specific regions or nations.<sup>36</sup> In 1947, the U.S. Army established FASP, a direct precursor to the modern U.S. Army FAO program, to expand on the language program's success. The path from FASP to FAO is captured in Figure 11.

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<sup>36</sup> Neil M. Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program* (Quantico, VA: The United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 1974), 8.

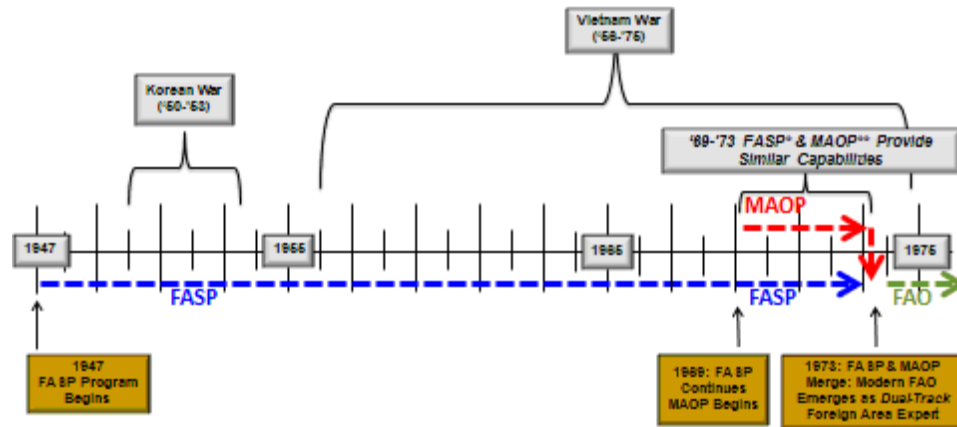


Figure 11. The U.S. Army's Concurrent Efforts; FASP, MAOP, and Consolidation into the Modern FAO Program, 1947–1975

The FASP program provided officers “with knowledge of the language, military, history, culture and sociology of a particular region or country, FASP’s purpose was to train and utilize officers in positions requiring detailed knowledge of foreign areas.”<sup>37</sup> FASP was designated a “special career program,” equivalent to a contemporary U.S. Army functional area (FA). FASP training could take up to four years and consisted of civilian graduate school (one year), language (up to two years) and in-country training (one year). FASP officers retained their basic branch identity and alternated<sup>38</sup> between FASP and basic branch assignments. The FASP program fell under the operational oversight of the U.S. Army’s Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (ASCI),<sup>39</sup> and the focus of the program gradually shifted to intelligence activities. Officers in the military intelligence (MI) branch were heavily recruited for the FASP program, while outside of MI, FASP was viewed as a “promotion dead-end,”<sup>40</sup> and thus, suffered recruiting challenges.

<sup>37</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army’s Foreign Area Officer Program*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Alternating is now referred to as “Dual Tracking.”

<sup>39</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army’s Foreign Area Officer Program*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

In May 1965, the U.S. Army convened the Haines Board to “provide a blueprint for the Army [officer] school system for the next 10 years.”<sup>41</sup> The board consisted of four general officers, four colonels, and two lieutenant colonels who looked at officer training in general, as well as the specific aspects of all separate training programs. In total, the Haines Board made 74 recommendations,<sup>42</sup> and is credited as the first in a series of reviews that “did more to change the [U.S. Army] officer development process than anything else since the end of World War II.”<sup>43</sup> The board’s recommendation 40 was to “Consolidate the FASP and Civil Affairs Specialist Program into a Foreign Studies Specialist Program.”<sup>44</sup> While recommendation 40 was not adopted when the report was published, it resulted in General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army (CSA),<sup>45</sup> convening a specific study based on recommendation 40 under the auspices of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (DCSPER).

The findings of this subsequent study, known as DCSPER-40, were briefed to General Johnson in March 1968. DCSPER-40 recommended leaving the FASP program in tact as named, but it also recommended a new program that was soon re-designated as the MAOP. Thus, in a time of protracted war, the program was intended to address the shortcomings of psychological operations (PSYOP) and civil affairs (CA), while bringing together the military functions related to advising host nation military forces (MAOP Parallel #1 with SOLO).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Army Adjutant General Memorandum, December 9, 1970, Signed by MG Kenneth G. Wickham.

<sup>42</sup> Report of the DA Board to Review Army Officer Schools (Haines Board) DCSPER November 24, 1970, V.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur T. Coumbe, *Army Officer Development: Historical Context* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 6.

<sup>44</sup> Report of the DA Board to Review Army Officer Schools (Haines Board) DCSPER November 24, 1970, IV.

<sup>45</sup> General Harold K. Johnson was the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army from 1964–1968.

<sup>46</sup> Parallel: The MAOP program was established to meet wartime needs, as was the SOLO program. Parallels are highlighted throughout Chapter IV and explored thoroughly in Chapter V.

Key to the MAOP program was its “focus on operational issues, separate from the intelligence focus of FASP” (MAOP Parallel #2 with SOLO).<sup>47</sup>

General Johnson approved the final recommendation of the DSCPER-40, and authorized AR 614–134, which charged the MAOP with developing officers with “critical skills needed to serve as commanders and advisors and to man key staff positions in the conduct of military activities having social, economic, political, and psychological impact,”<sup>48</sup> with a focus on “developing nations and the positive role of indigenous military forces in contributing to [host-nation] national development.” General Johnson placed the MAOP program under the operational oversight of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS). This organizational arrangement was intentionally established to identify the MAOP as “operational, with a place for the generalist.”<sup>49</sup>

Today, the USASOC is responsible for managing the careers of U.S. Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) personnel, including PSYOP and CA officers, among others. In 1968, however, USASOC did not yet exist and DCSOPS managed the PSYOP and CA programs. As a result of the MAOP program also forming under DCSOPS, PSYOP and CA officers were heavily recruited into the MAOP program. Unfortunately, many had already reached career dead ends and would not be promoted to Colonel after entering the program at a lower rank (MAOP Parallel #3 with SOLO).<sup>50</sup> By 1972, the early selection issues had been corrected by adopting extremely stringent selection

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<sup>47</sup> Parallel: The MAOP program was to focus on operational issues vice intelligence collection, the same focus as the SOLO program.

<sup>48</sup> Robert D. Ramsey III, *Advising Indigenous Forces, American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 18 (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 63.

<sup>49</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 13; Parallel: Reiterates MAOP operational focus.

<sup>50</sup> Parallel: The MAOP program struggled with getting its officers promoted, just as the SOLO program struggles today.

criteria. Applicants admitted into the MAOP program from 1972 onward were, thus, in their respective branch's top bracket.<sup>51</sup>

Generally, candidate requirements for the MAOP program were as follows: rank of Captain (CPT) to Colonel (COL), completion of appropriate level of military schooling; Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree or higher, exceptional performance record, language proficiency of 3/3 or higher, minimum of three years of active duty service remaining (MAOP Parallel #4 with SOLO).<sup>52</sup> Candidates were selected into the program based on previously acquired core competencies. Additionally, a 19–22 week course was taught at the JFK Center for Special Warfare<sup>53</sup> at Ft. Bragg, NC and remained required training for officers in the MAOP program. Part of the course included interagency training held in Washington, DC, which allowed “students to meet in conference with officials from the highest levels of government and the private sector.”<sup>54</sup> The MAOP advisor course was tailored to the individual MAOP assignment.<sup>55</sup> The JFK Center for Special Warfare even changed its name following the MAOP pilot programs to the JFK Center for Military Assistance to best reflect its training relationship with the U.S. Army MAOP program. Officers serving in the MAOP program could expect to alternate between their MAOP utilization and assignments in their basic Army branch.

Although a need for thousands of MAOP positions was anticipated, only 433 officers were participating in MAOP by 1972. Compared with 563 officers in FASP, it was obvious that the Army was having trouble attracting quality personnel in the quantity that the MAOP program needed (Parallel #5).<sup>56</sup> In

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<sup>51</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Parallel: Generally, the MAOP program desired similar qualifications as SOLO.

<sup>53</sup> Since renamed to “U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School” or USAJFKSWCS.

<sup>54</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>56</sup> Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces, American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, 64; Parallel: Both MAOP and SOLO experienced difficulty in attracting ideally qualified personnel.



1973, the U.S. Army combined the FASP and MAOP programs into the contemporary FAO program (see Figure 14). The decision was based on the belief that the FASP and MAOP programs were so similar that they would profit from a single personnel management system.<sup>57</sup> It should be noted that even after the merger, the 22-week course at Ft. Bragg was retained as a phase of required training for the new FAO program.<sup>58</sup>

The final, and perhaps, most compelling historical parallel between MAOP and SOLO, is the overall environment that resulted in the complete reconfiguration of the MAOP program as the Vietnam War came to a conclusion. As shown in Figure 12, MAOP and SOLO were created at a time when funding was readily available and the force was expanding. When budgets began shrinking as the Vietnam War drew to a close, the U.S. Army sought to gain efficiencies by merging the similar FASP and MAOP programs into the Army FAO program. No such decision has been made for the SOLO program, but as Figure 12 shows, the SOLO program is operating under very similar budgetary and troop strength conditions that contributed to the end of MAOP.

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<sup>57</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

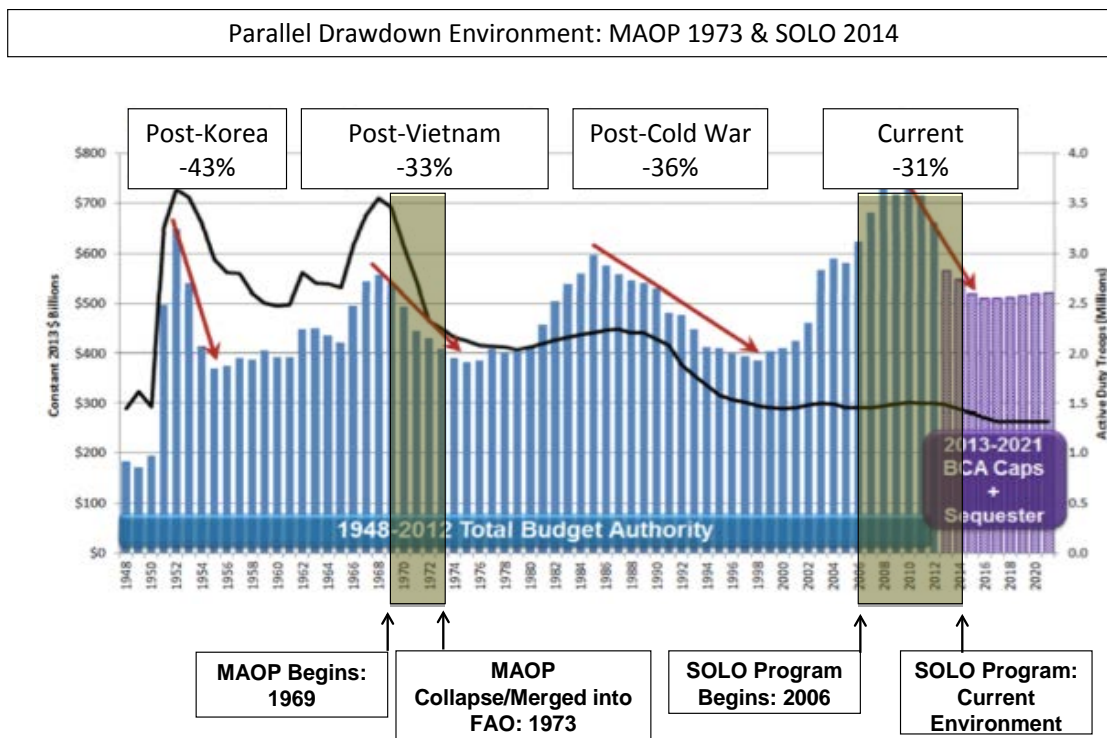


Figure 12. Parallel Drawdown Environment; MAOP in 1973 and SOLO in 2014<sup>59</sup>

General Johnson allowed a year for the merger of FASP and MAOP, and directed that a Foreign Area Officer Management System (FAOMS) committee, consisting of members from Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations & Plans (ODCSOPS), Army Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence (ACSI), and Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel (ODCSPER) be established to coordinate the merger.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, the FAOMS established a board of General Officers (GOs) to provide senior level direction and guidance, which naturally increased senior leader buy-in for the new program. These GOs, with perhaps no prior official interests in the FAO program, were now personally vested in its success.

The FAOMS formed the merger plans and approved all staff agreements for the new program. Additional skill identifiers (ASIs) were used as personnel

<sup>59</sup> Brad Plumer, "America's Staggering Defense Budget, in Charts," *The Washington Post*, January 7, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/01/07/everything-chuck-hagel-needs-to-know-about-the-defense-budget-in-charts/>.

<sup>60</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 21.

management tools to identify essential training for FAO positions. The ASIs were included in personnel requisition documents to insure proper identification of all FAO positions. Furthermore, only positions validated by the Army for graduate degree training would be designated as FAO billets.<sup>61</sup>

The FAOMS committee submitted a final report that informed the FAO program regulation published in March 1973. Most significantly, the regulation placed the new program under the operational oversight of the DCSOPS vice the ASCI. The program was intended to maintain its established operations focus. The ASCI would continue to monitor intelligence assignments, as well as the overseas phase of training. DCSOPS was also charged with chairing a board of stakeholders in the new FAO program. FAO program advice was, therefore, systematically sought from key Army staff elements, representatives from the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and the JFK Center for Military Assistance.<sup>62</sup>

All prior FASP and MAOP officers were automatically accepted into the FAO program, and could still expect to alternate between assignments in the new FAO program and their basic branch, just as before. A significant change, due to FAOs close ties to the Army's new (in 1974) officer personnel management system (OPMS), was the FAO program's inclusion as one of 47 specialties that contain sufficient duty positions to support career progression to the rank of COL.<sup>63</sup>

A significant metric still in use by the FAO proponent to measure the value of a program is the promotion rate of the officers who serve within the specific program.<sup>64</sup> Following the merger of the FASP and MAOP in 1973, FAO officers did exceptionally well. In 1974, compared to 68% of eligible officers being

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<sup>61</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>63</sup> OPMS Fact Sheet, Updated 1974.

<sup>64</sup> DWG FAO Proponent, Washington, DC, March 14, 2014.

promoted Army-wide, 90% of eligible FAOs were promoted.<sup>65</sup> This percentage is important both as a metric for the program's ability to meet Army mission requirements, and to highlight the successful processes that the Army used to establish broad support for its new program. Even as one stakeholder (ASCI) lost overall organizational control in favor of another stakeholder (DCSOPS), the ASCI was able to maintain assignment authority over the ASI coded personnel that now belonged to the FAO program.<sup>66</sup> The intelligence-oriented FAOs fell under the operational oversight of DCSOPS, but individual positions were managed by the ASCI. The importance of this arrangement in the early days of the FAO program is significant for two reasons. The quantity of former FASP program officers whose positions were managed outside of DCSOPS channels, and the U.S. Army's institutional acceptance of the new FAO program as evidenced by its promotion rate was 22% higher than the U.S. Army average in its very first year of existence.

## **B. LINKING THE “SINGLE-TRACK” TO A REPEAT CAPABILITY GAP**

In 1973, the FAO program “blended the best of both FASP and MAOP”<sup>67</sup> and provided the political-military officer capability that the U.S. Army required, largely unchanged, until 1997. Beginning in 1997, however, FAOs would no longer alternate between FAO positions and positions in their basic Army branch (dual-track to single-track). This change enabled the FAO functional area to provide the Army better skills on the FASP end of the FAO skills spectrum, but at a cost to individual officers and the Army in terms of both operational relevance and the “blended”<sup>68</sup> skills on the MAOP end of the FAO skills spectrum.

In addition to the post-1997 challenge of operational relevance, the FAO program continued its FASP-legacy intelligence focus. Today, U.S. Army FAOs

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<sup>65</sup> Haggerty, *The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer Program*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

account for more than 1/3rd of all Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) strategic information.<sup>69</sup> The U.S. Army's experience in the Vietnam War placed a substantial amount of stress on its post-WWII FASP program, revealing a capability gap that resulted in the Army's development of the MAOP program. Implementing the single-track FAO career model, while also continuing the FAO program's intelligence focus, appears to have recreated conditions in peacetime for modern FAOs that plagued the intelligence-oriented FASP program, and the Army, so significantly in a time of protracted conflict during the Vietnam war.

The events of September 11, 2001, and the prolonged wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, once again placed substantial strain on the U.S. Army as a whole, and on the contemporary single-track Army FAO program, in particular. An example of this strain occurred in 2010, when the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army allowed midcareer FAOs to compete on the annual command selection list (CSL) for command of military transition teams (MiTTs). While "381 FAOs were eligible to compete...only 3 officers—less than 1% of the available pool—were selected for MiTT command."<sup>70</sup> A contemporary explanation for this below average selection rate "is that the seasoned FAO population lacks the kind of operational experiences that both pervade the post-9/11 Army and are valued by selection boards."<sup>71</sup> U.S. Army FAOs remain regionally focused political-military experts, but the strain and pressure of continuous war and global commitments have once again re-emphasized a need for contemporary operational relevance, particularly where CSL boards and globally oriented SOF commanders are concerned. Figure 13 shows the SOF-operations-focused SOLO program alongside the intelligence-oriented Army FAO program. Although separated by nearly 40 years, Figure 13 displays a striking similarity to Figure 11.

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<sup>69</sup> U.S. Army FAO Strategic Leadership Division Overview Briefing, FAO Proponent, March 14, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel E. Mouton, "The Army's Foreign Area Officer Program: To Wither or to Improve?" *Army Magazine*, March 2011, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Mouton, "The Army's Foreign Area Officer Program: To Wither or to Improve?" 22. Mouton's 2nd explanation was that the "Army as a whole lack the appropriate guidance from the Chief of Staff of the Army as to how the FAO career path can serve the Army's requirements."

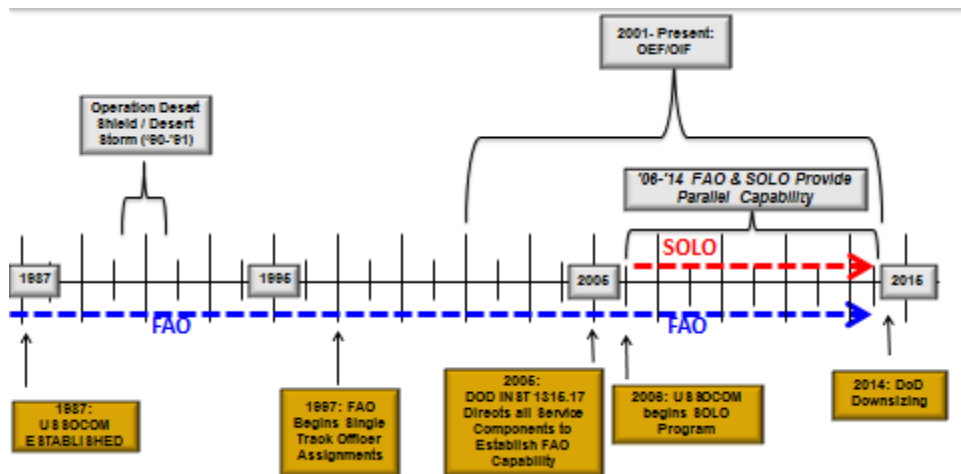


Figure 13. The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program and Origin of the USSOCOM SOLO Program

### C. CONCLUSION

Compelling similarities exist between the U.S. Army's Vietnam-era MAOP program and the USSOCOM SOLO program. These similarities are presented in context throughout this chapter, and concisely presented in Figure 14.

	Military Assistance Officer Program (MAOP)	Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO)
Program genesis formed from wartime needs		
Operationally focused v. Intelligence focused		
Program reconfiguration upon war completion		

Figure 14. Table of MAOP and SOLO Parallels from Chapter IV

Both the Vietnam War, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have demonstrated that the demand for operations-focused officers with regional expertise increases in a time of protracted armed conflict. When this capability demand is not readily available from existing programs, the requisite capability is likely to be built by a service, or a service-like command, such as USSOCOM. This capability gap drove the establishment of MAOP in 1969 when the intelligence-focused FASP program could not meet the Army's wartime needs alone. A similar capability demand led to the SOLO program's beginning in 2006, when contemporary SOF wartime needs<sup>72</sup> could not be met by the Army's single-track FAO program. History has thus provided stark parallels that have informed our in-depth analysis and subsequent recommendations that are presented in Chapter V.

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<sup>72</sup> See LTC Mouton's comments on page 38 of this chapter.

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## V. COURSES OF ACTION

### A. INTRODUCTION

The research team began this study with the set of nine questions presented by USSOCOM J55 SOLO program managers, which were reduced to four manageable questions listed in Chapter I. This chapter presents three COAs for USSOCOM SOLO program managers as they pursue a renewed and enhanced program in support of the GSN. This chapter provides and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of three COAs using criteria compiled from USSOCOM official documents, numerous working group discussions, and comparative analysis. The three COAs are enhanced status quo, the SF-FAO option, and alignment with USASOC initiative. Each of the three COAs gives USSOCOM viable options to renew the SOLO program.

#### 1. COA 1: Enhanced Status Quo

All stakeholders agree that the SOLO capability is a critical component to the enhancement of the GSN. With this in mind, COA 1: enhanced status quo is presented. Figure 15 represents the SOLO program operating independent of the FAO program.

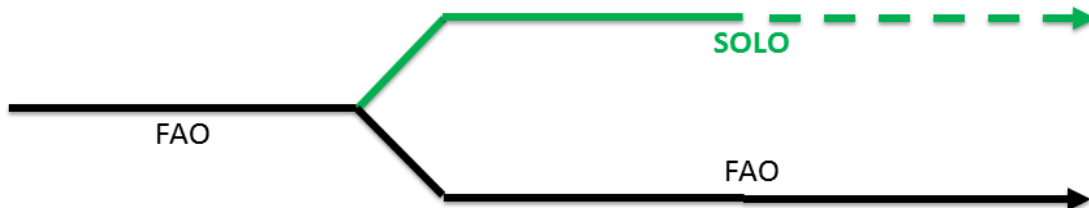


Figure 15. Enhanced Status Quo Option Affording USSOCOM an Enhanced SOLO Capability

This COA will afford USSOCOM an enhanced SOLO capability by addressing stated concerns and USSOCOM's noted issues. The enhanced

“status quo” COA, as the name implies, involves the maintenance of the program as described in Chapter III with two enhancements. These additional enhancements may provide stakeholders and candidates alike the requisite knowledge and understanding of the program.

**a. *Program Execution: Socialize the Program***

USSOCOM SOLO program managers need to socialize the SOLO program actively. The lack of socialization is likely the most significant reason for the lack of service component buy-in discovered during the research. The fact that most of the individuals who fall into the category of “would-be candidates” for the SOLO program do not even know that it exists presents a serious issue for the program in its current state. Most troubling is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the SOLO program at U.S. Army SF Proponency and U.S. Army SF branch. While all stakeholders with knowledge of the program who participated in this study supported the SOLO program, as well as the individual officers who served as SOLOs; it remains incumbent on USSOCOM to ensure that U.S. Army SF leaders and personnel managers are aware that the program exists.

Connecting the line of communication between USSOCOM SOLO Managers in the J55 and SF branch managers will provide a key first step toward socialization.

A requisite second step is for USSOCOM to reach out to the centers of excellence listed with information briefings and recruitment packets.

- United States Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army SF field grade officers attend a myriad of courses including intermediate level education (ILE), the Schools of Advanced Military Studies, and the School for Command Preparation. Additionally, students represent interagency partners that attend these courses as well.
- The Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA: U.S. Army SF field grade officers attend NPS prior to returning to the force to complete the key and developmental assignments. A small

population of SF senior leaders also completes fellowships at NPS in lieu of attending the Army War College.

- The Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, PA: Senior Army SF officers, and senior level officers from across the Army, attend the war college in route to senior Army and joint leadership positions.
- At the various SF operational groups and TSOCs: Almost all potential candidates for the SOLO program will complete their key and developmental assignments in these locations distributed around the world.

Distributing to the listed locations will have immediate effects across the SF regiment as potential candidates are informed of its existence and the mission and benefits associated with the assignment.

USSOCOM should prepare articles to be published in journals and other mediums read by prospective SOLO recruits, as well as senior U.S. Army and Joint Force leaders with the intent of expanding knowledge about the existence of the program. The articles should focus on informing the audience of the program, highlighting successful implementation, and the benefits associated with the assignment. Again the object is to inform the force overall and increase self-selection into the program as officers eligible for consideration become familiar with the program and the benefits of participation. More importantly, awareness can potentially help USSOCOM to attain service buy-in throughout the U.S. Army Special Forces Command (USASFC) and USASOC community, as well as the Army and DOD writ large.

***b. Program Execution: Work Hand-in-Hand with SF Branch Managers and Proponency***

While the socialization of the program will improve the understanding of the program, it will not directly affect the functionality of the program. It will not help to improve the personnel management of the officers who serve as SOLOs or their potential for career enhancement. USSOCOM SOLO program managers must work more directly and deliberately with Army SF personnel and SF Proponency representatives.

Working with SF personnel managers who work from SF branch (Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, KY) will be required to improve the program to reduce the strain on SF branch managers to find, select, and emplace qualified officers for SOLO assignments in a timely manner. Finding the qualified officers for a SOLO assignment requires branch managers to scour personnel records to find the officers who not only meet the desired qualifications, but also are eligible to be moved to this assignment without negatively affecting their career or their family. Additionally, creating new assignments for SF officers who have associated qualification creates new demands on branch managers.

Highlighted in Figure 16 are the statistics that underlie the importance of working with branch managers in advance to avoid creating issues with the personnel responsible for manning these assignments for USSOCOM. Specifically, only two field grade officers have the desired 3/3/3 language qualification and five with a 2/2/2 who could possibly serve in USSOCOM's pending SOLO position in Kuwait. It is not a large pool to choose from, especially when the selection is compounded by the fact that these potential candidates may not meet any of the other desired SOLO qualifications.

PENDING SOLO BILLETS CODED FOR US ARMY SF OFFICER				
COUNTRY	LANGUAGE	SERVICE/ BILLET GRADE	CURRENT LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY	
			2/2/2	3/3/3
			O3 / O4 & O5	
Kuwait	Arabic	USA / O-4	31/5	1/2
El Salvador	Spanish	USA / O-4	104/77	39/60
Iraq	Arabic	USA / O-6	31/5	1/2
Mexico	Spanish	USA / O-6	104/77	39/60

Figure 16. Pending SOLO Billets Coded for SF Officers

In addition to SOLO qualifications, these service members may be ineligible for a PCS move or have no desire to participate in the SOLO program due to its terminal nature that results in the most qualified people being placed elsewhere, which will detrimentally affect the SOLO program. By working closely with branch representatives, USSOCOM and SF branch will be able to get in

front of the assignment cycle and address the current reactive nature of the SOLO assignment process, a USSOCOM identified weakness of the SOLO program.

Working with SF Proponent leaders will directly address the potential for an SF officer's career enhancement through participation in the SOLO program. While it may not result in the codification of the SOLO program as a key and developmental assignment, the equivalent of a battalion-level command for an O-5/LTC, it could result in SOLO becoming codified as a broadening assignment in AR 600-3. This identification will help with recruitment by serving as a reward for officers assigned as SOLOs by keeping them competitive for promotion. Officers at SF Proponency have indicated that this type of action is within the realm of possibility, however, it has not been formally addressed in their office.<sup>73</sup>

Working closely with SF branch/SF Proponency personnel will also help with the coordination of SOLO recruitment efforts timed in accordance with officer career milestones, such as ILE, service War College, promotion and command select boards. The timeline proposed in Figure 17 is an example of what an SF officer's career timeline could look like including SOLO assignment(s).

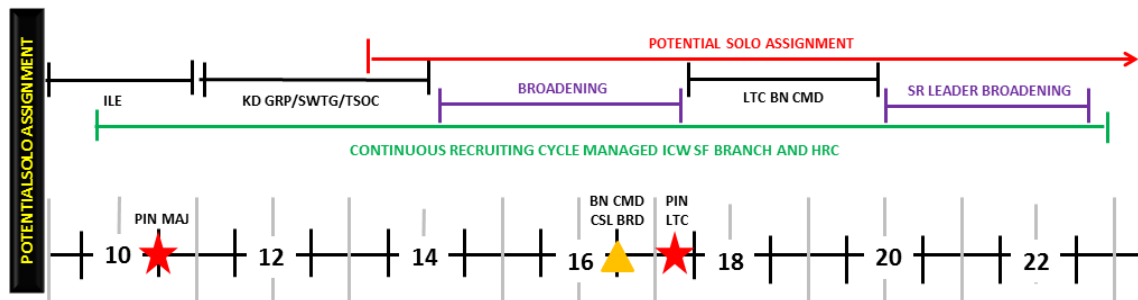


Figure 17. SF Officer's Career Timeline Showing Potential for SOLO Assignments

<sup>73</sup> Working Groups with SF Proponency personnel at Fort Bragg, NC, March 12, 2014.

**c. Advantages/Disadvantages of Enhanced Status Quo Option**

(1) Promotion Opportunities. **Disadvantage.** This COA will not directly do anything to address the current terminal nature of the SOLO assignment.

(2) Potential for Promotion to O6. **Disadvantage.** This COA does not directly address USSOCOM's desire to make officers selected to participate in the SOLO program competitive for promotion to the rank of O-6.

(3) Adequate Supply of Qualified SF Officers. **Advantage.** By socializing the program and working more closely with SF branch and Proponency personnel, USSOCOM will increase its pool of potential SOLO candidates. It is assessed that this COA will result in increased self-nomination and efficiency of assignments and an SF officer's actual career managers will be more engaged in the process.

(4) Program Known Outside of USSOCOM. **Advantage.** By preparing, publishing, and distributing products, USSOCOM will directly address the issues currently associated with a lack of knowledge and understanding of the program.

(5) SOLOs Receive Language, Culture and Interagency Training. **Disadvantage.** This COA does not provide any additional training for SF officers selected to serve as SOLOs. USSOCOM will have to rely upon skills and experiences that the officers already have prior to selection to the program.

(6) SOLO's Family Is Prepared for Life Away From U.S. Military Base OCONUS. **Disadvantage.** This COA will not directly help the officer's family to better prepare and assimilate for life overseas, away from a military base. While increased knowledge and understanding will likely aid in decreasing the strain, it will not be enough to adequately prepare the officer or his family.

(7) USSOCOM and TSOCs Maintain 100% Control of SOLO Assignments. **Advantage.** This COA maintains 100% control of the assignment process at the USSOCOM and TSOC level. While noted as a reactive and ad-hoc process, it has worked to this point.

## 2. COA 2: The SF-FAO Option

The SF-FAO option is predicated by the acceptance that USSOCOM wants to retain the SOLO capability and desires that the officers who participate remain competitive for promotion to O-6. This COA indicates a level of acceptance of history's ability to repeat itself as highlighted in Chapter IV's comparative analysis. The current course being pursued by USSOCOM mirrors that of the MAOP program's inception during the Vietnam War. It is our assessment that for many of the same reasons it was deemed a good COA then, it remains a viable COA for consideration today, as illustrated by Figure 18. It is necessary to acknowledge up front that this COA will require much more work on the part of USSOCOM, SF, and FAO leaders.

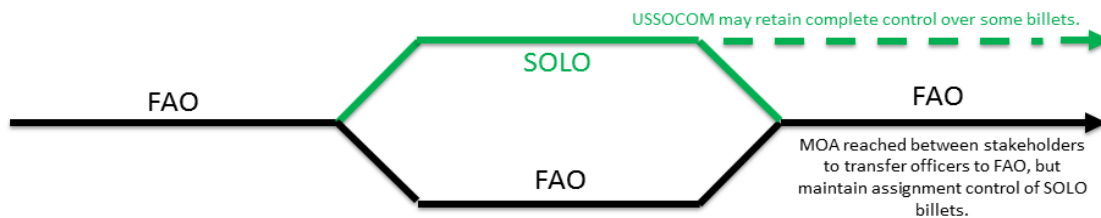


Figure 18. SF-FAO Option Providing Capability and Personnel Management

The U.S. Army FAO program is an established, successful functional area within the Operations Support Career Designation field. This COA would directly improve the officer's ability to compete for promotion to O-6. It would require SF branch to release a number of officers to the FAO Branch, thus losing direct control of the officers and their career management. The officers would officially transition to the FAO branch (FA48), which ends their careers as SF officers (18A). Therefore, all affected officers would have their careers managed by FAO Branch and Proponency personnel.

According to Figure 19, SF is currently well over 100% strength in all field grade ranks.

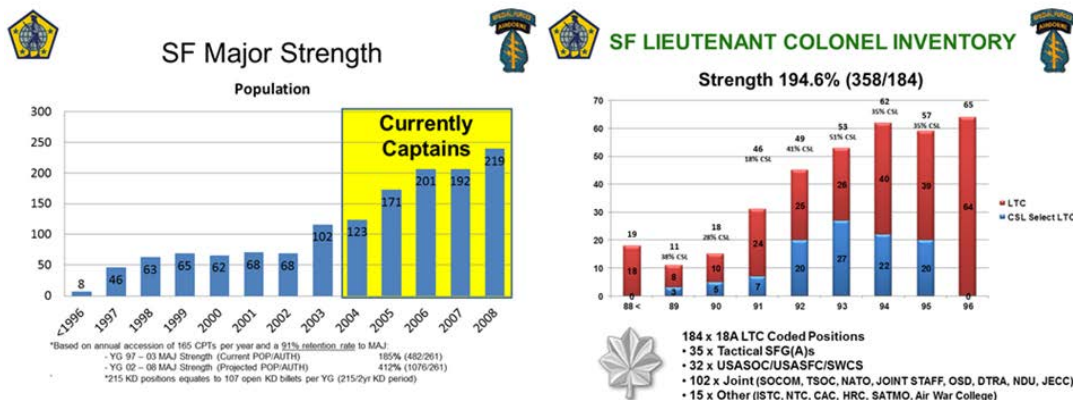


Figure 19. Current and Projected SF Field Grade Officer Strength<sup>74</sup>

SF is thus presented the opportunity to reduce the number of field grade officers in its formation—as required by the U.S. Army—while assisting the FAO branch in manning its ranks. The transfer of officers between the branches was also offered by FAO branch in the form of an email on March 11, 2014. The email, drafted by the SF Branch Chief, was targeting U.S. Army officers eligible for consideration of transferring into the functional area. It specifically stated, “Special Operations Officers have additional opportunities. . . SOF officers may be selected as Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLOs) with key allies,”<sup>75</sup> indicating that the branch may be receptive to an agreement of this type.

Depending upon the agreement reached between stakeholders affected by this COA, many of the stated concerns are addressed, but the lack of control over assignments and operational relevancy may be degraded.

#### a. **Advantages/Disadvantages of SF-FAO Option**

(1) Promotion Opportunities. **Advantage.** Officers who transfer into the FAO branch will always remain competitive for promotion, as all the SOLO

<sup>74</sup> SF Branch Brief, February 12, 2013, Presented at Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

<sup>75</sup> “Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Transfer Opportunities email from U.S. Army Human Resources Command, FAO Branch Chief LTC David M. Kobs, March 11, 2014.



assignments are codified as key and development. It will support promotion opportunities regardless of when the officer enters the program.

(2) Potential for Promotion to O6. **Advantage.** By transferring to the Operations Support Career Designation Field, the officers will become much more competitive for promotion to O–6. Currently, the SOLO assignment is not likely to ever be considered or codified as the equivalent of a Battalion Command with SF branch.

(3) Adequate Supply of Qualified SF Officers. **Advantage.** All officers in the Army are contacted at several points throughout their career offering options, such as the one proposed. In other words, *all* SF officers will be informed of the opportunity that exists for SOLO assignments, promotions, and all other associated benefits, which will result in an increase in the number of potential SOLOs, as the information will be presented. **Disadvantage.** Operational relevancy will likely be degraded as the officers FAO typically tries to draw into the program enter in between the eight and eleven years of service point in their career. Thus, the experiences garnered by the SF officers during their major KD time (indicated in Figure 17) will be lost. Most stakeholders, including FAO, identified operational relevancy as a major key to SOLO success and a current advantage over the FAO program.<sup>76</sup>

(4) Program Known Outside of USSOCOM. **Advantage.** Utilizing this COA will ensure that the opportunity is better communicated throughout the Army and across the various embassies at which FAOs and SOLOs serve. Not only will the program be known outside of USSOCOM, it will also be coordinated, funded, and distributed by FAO branch as it will be used to appeal to potential SF-FAO officers.

(5) SOLOs Receive Language, Culture and Interagency Training. **Advantage.** As part of the FAO life cycle, all officers will receive language training, ILE, a Master's degree, and in region training. **Disadvantage.** Again,

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<sup>76</sup> Working Group Roundtables at USSOCOM HQ, December 1–5, 2013; FAO Working Group Roundtable at Washington, DC, FAO Proponent, March 14, 2014.

officers will be removed from the SF branch prior to receiving the valued experience as an SF Major. This operational relevancy of the SOLO will be degraded as a result.

(6) SOLO's Family Is Prepared for Life Away From U.S. Military Base OCONUS. **Advantage.** FAOs have a commendable track record of attending to the needs of families. Spouses of FAOs may also be provided language and cultural training prior to a deployment to a foreign country.

(7) USSOCOM and TSOCs Maintain 100% Control of SOLO Assignments. **Disadvantage.** Since the FAO Branch and Proponency will manage the officers, USSOCOM and the TSOCs will have a diminished capability to hand-select the officers for the critical SOLO positions.

### 3. COA 3: Alignment with USASOC Initiative

This COA requires that USASOC and/or USASFC support the alignment of the SOLO program with a supported, codified addition to AR 600–3, as illustrated in Figure 20.



Figure 20. SOLO Aligned with Codified USASOC/USASFC Initiative

Initiatives are concurrently being developed and codified by the USASOC Office of Special Warfare. The codification of these initiatives makes the participating officers competitive for promotion as assignments are codified in AR 600–3. Moreover, it is a clear indication that the assignment is actively supported by the Army at large and propagated by SF branch and proponency personnel. This COA will require much more work on the part of USASOC, USASFC, and

USSOCOM, but provides the only SOF-only bilateral option for a renewed SOLO program.

**a. *Advantages/Disadvantages of Alignment USASOC Initiative***

(1) Promotion Opportunities. **Advantage.** If codified as key and developmental, the assignment will have promotion appeal at Army promotion and command select boards. If codification of key and developmental is not supported, the potential for it to become a “broadening” assignment exists and should be pursued. The SOLO assignment will be listed in AR 600–3 and indicated that it is beneficial for an officer’s career to participate.

(2) Potential for Promotion to O–6. **Disadvantage.** It will be difficult to pass through the SF regiment and the Army in the maneuver, fires and effects career designation field. Currently, the only assignment making an O–5 competitive for promotion to O–6 in the SF branch is a Battalion Command. **Advantage.** If aligned with a USASOC initiative and codified in AR 600–3, all officers participating in the program at the rank of O–5 would be competitive for promotion to the rank of O–6.

(3) Adequate Supply of Qualified SF Officers. **Advantage.** Again, if codified as key and developmental or broadening, all SF officers will be informed of the potential SOLO assignments to include information regarding prerequisite requirements that will help influence officers to maintain and/or acquire the skills necessary to participate therein.

(4) Program Known Outside of USSOCOM. **Advantage.** The assignment would be actively supported and broadcasted throughout SF. Part of it would include its inclusion in command and branch media.

(5) SOLOs Receive Language, Culture and Interagency Training. **Advantage.** If supported, the officers will have already been trained in, and maintained a target language, received experience in embassies within a TSOC AOR, and worked with interagency partners.

(6) SOLO's Family Is Prepared for Life Away From U.S. Military Base OCONUS. **Advantage.** SOLO's families would be more prepared for this type of lifestyle, as they would have already experienced it prior to serving as a SOLO.

(7) USSOCOM and TSOCs Maintain 100% Control of SOLO Assignments. **Advantage.** While it would be an additional burden on the personnel management entities of USASOC, USASFC, and USSOCOM, it would provide 100% control over the assignments process.

## B. SUMMARY

We have summarized many of our observations in Table 2. In closing this chapter, the research team reiterates that all three COAs presented will support the stated goals USSOCOM outlined at the onset of the study.

Table 2. COA Advantage and Disadvantage Analysis Summary

	Status Quo	SF-FAO Option	Aligned with USA SOC
Promotion opportunities	X	+	+
Potential for promotion of O6	X	+	+
Adequate supply of qualified officers	+	+	+
Program known outside of USSOCOM	+	+	+
SOLOs receive language, culture & interagency training	X	+	+
SOLOs family prepared for life away from military base OCONUS	X	+	+
USSOCOM & TSOCs maintain 100% control of personnel assignments (BNR)	+	X	+

All COAs have different costs and benefits associated, as well as varying degrees of difficulty in implementation. However, all are assessed as being feasible and achievable in the near term. COA 1 presents USSOCOM with perhaps the most easily and quickly executable COA, but the associated drawbacks could lead to the extension and complication of the current issues

negatively affecting the program. COA 2 presents a very appealing option, as it will decrease the demands on USSOCOM, USASOC, and USASFC. However, the loss of control over the assignments may present an irreconcilable issue between the associated stakeholders. COA 3 positively addresses the concerns proposed by USSOCOM SOLO program managers, but may be the most difficult to implement. Even if USASOC and USASFC support and align the program, Department of the Army-level support for the codification of the SOLO assignment as a command equivalent presents a serious obstacle.

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## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Over the 10-month course of this study, we are convinced now more than ever that the SOLO program is a worthwhile endeavor. Hundreds of hours of discussion involving 35 stakeholders from 14 organizations have made a convincing argument. Not once have we heard that the program lacks value, which legitimizes the purpose of this study. How is it possible to provide a regionally focused “SOF FAO” *capability* to USSOCOM? As stated in Chapter I, the following questions were asked in pursuit of accomplishing this purpose.

- Do other parallels exist from other programs to inform a renewed regional SOF career track/program?
  - U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer Program (FAO: 1973–Present)
  - U.S. Army Foreign Area Specialist Program (FASP: 1947–1973)
  - U.S. Army Military Advisor Officer Program (MAOP: 1969–1973)
- Based on this review of other programs, what features could inform a renewed SOLO program?
- Based on this review of other programs, what life cycle model could inform a renewed SOLO program?
- What issues are likely to impede the implementation of a renewed SOLO program and how can SOF address them?

### **A. LOOKING BACK TO SEE THE FUTURE**

Just as the MAOP program emerged during the Vietnam War, the SOLO program emerged during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The sequence of events surrounding the 1973 convergence of the MAOP and FASP programs into the FAO program is reoccurring now. We are not recommending to follow blindly in these predecessors’ steps. However, ignoring the path they have illuminated would be ill advised. As Mark Twain said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” These lessons learned have been captured and incorporated into the COAs we have recommended.

## **B. WAY AHEAD**

In the course of this multimethod project, three COAs emerged: 1) enhance the status quo, 2) merge the SOLO program into FAO, and 3) alignment with a USASOC initiative. Archival data, stakeholder working groups, and comparative case analysis, not only helped reveal viable COAs, but also helped answer the aforementioned research questions. We submit that the proposed COAs will satisfy three of the five military decision-making criteria: suitability, feasibility, and distinguishability. Further research is suggested to determine the remaining two criteria, acceptability, and completeness.

Acceptability is going to require GO involvement. Although our stakeholder working groups helped develop acceptable COAs, the recommended COAs have never been briefed to the identified organizational stakeholders in their entirety. Creating the FAO program in 1973 required GO involvement and buy-in from *all* relevant stakeholders. We submit that acceptability of their COAs will never be complete without similar GO involvement and buy-in from *all* of the identified stakeholders. We recommend effort be made to build a consensus of the most acceptable COA before more resources are consumed in this current limited resource environment.

Although we incorporated multimethods in our study, we acknowledge the incompleteness of the research due to time constraints. Finding a consensus of human resource life cycle model criteria, involving all relevant stakeholders, was outside the scope of this study, and due in part, to a lack of quantifiable data. We suggest a follow-on survey be conducted similar to the 2012 QuickCompass of Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) and Supervisors (2012 QFAO), which was conducted on behalf of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense of Personnel and Readiness (OUSD[P&R]). The hope is that future quantifiable research will more fully develop recommended COAs.

In the business world, good people, good products/services, and good processes are needed. All three are necessary for ultimate effectiveness. It has



been established that the SOLO program offers a valuable service. The people, the current SOLOs, and their project managers are making this service possible. Our recommendations in the form of COAs offer ways to improve the SOLO program and support the people who make it possible.

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